



**Public Safety Commission Recommendation no. 20190805-006  
Regarding Mental Health Funding for Public Safety in FY 2018-2019**

**Date: August 5, 2019**

**Subject: Recommendation to Austin City Council Regarding Mental Health First Response**

**Motioned by: Chris Harris**

**Seconded by: Daniela Nuñez**

WHEREAS, providing an adequate and effective response to mental health crises is an essential component of public safety; and

WHEREAS, clinical health workers should lead first response efforts for those in mental health crises whenever possible; and

WHEREAS, a 2018 City Auditor report found the city's mental health first response is not in line with widely accepted best practices; and

WHEREAS, a 2018 City Auditor report found Austin police used deadly force during mental health first response calls more than peer cities; and

WHEREAS, a 2019 Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (Meadows) report examining Austin's mental health first response system identified issues leading to over-incarceration and over-hospitalization; and

WHEREAS, a 2019 Meadows report noted shortcomings in identifying mental health crisis calls at the Austin 911 call center; and

WHEREAS, a 2019 Meadows report stated that the mental health stipend for Austin police officers impeded response availability of the best-trained officers; and

WHEREAS, a 2019 Meadows report found that Austin lacks clinical mental health care provider coverage during times with the highest volume of calls; and

WHEREAS, a Meadows report found that the Austin police department's Crisis Intervention Team follow-up protocols risked stigmatizing mental health needs; and

WHEREAS, a Meadows report found that Austin EMS' Community Health Paramedic Program (CHP) should be involved in crisis follow-up to streamline communications amongst providers and increase successful linkages to care;

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Austin Public Safety Commission recommends the following actions to Austin City Council regarding mental health 1<sup>st</sup> response:**

1. Prioritize funding for improvements to Austin's first response system in the FY 2020 budget to make sure we address mental health crises with appropriate services.
2. Improve training at the 911 call center and install clinical triage staff in the dispatch center so that mental health calls can be accurately identified and an appropriate response can be initiated.
3. Fund additional mental health clinicians to improve the City's capacity to respond effectively to people experiencing a mental health crisis via live and/or tele-health providers.
4. Expand EMS's CHP Program and incorporate it into crisis follow-up activities.
5. Require all Austin police officers to undergo mental health training to eliminate the need for a mental health stipend.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Austin Public Safety Commission:

1. Plans to revisit this issue to upon release of the Mental Health Stakeholder's Group initial quarterly report to review suggested improvements to Austin's Crisis Intervention Program.

**Vote**

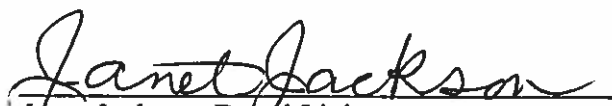
For: Unanimous

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 2 (Commissioners Rebecca Webber and Rebecca Gonzales)

Attest: *[Staff or board member can sign]*

  
Janet Jackson, Board Liaison,  
Austin Police Department